

## CORKWOOD

*Leitneria floridana* Chapman

**Synonyms:** none

**Family:** Simaroubaceae (quassia)

**FNAI Ranks:** G3/S3

**Legal Status:** US-none FL-Threatened

**Wetland Status:** US-none+ FL-OBL



Gil Nelson

**Field Description:** Deciduous **shrub or small tree** occurring in colonies. **Stem** solitary, erect to 15 feet tall, reddish with small corky patches and conspicuous leaf scars. **Leaves** alternate, with entire margins, clustered at top of the stem; mature **leaves** are smooth above and softly hairy beneath. **Leaf stalks** 1 - 1.5 inches long, **leaf blades** 2 - 7 inches long, 1 - 1.5 inches wide. Tiny **flowers** are borne in erect catkins on last year's wood before leaves emerge; **female and male flowers** usually on separate plants. **Female catkins** 0.5 - 1 inch long, dark red; **male catkins** to 2 inches long, yellow-brown. **Fruits** smooth, yellow turning to brown, leathery, 0.5 - 1 inch long, flattened on one side, rounded on the other, in clusters.

**Similar Species:** Other wetland trees with simple leaves such as swamp bay (*Persea palustris*) and swamp tupelo (*Nyssa biflora*) may resemble corkwood, but the clonal habit and separate male and female catkins make this species easily identifiable, particularly in spring before plants are fully leafed out.

## corkwood

## *Leitneria floridana*

**Related Rare Species:** Corkwood is the only species in this family (Leitneriaceae), although some researchers place *Leitneria* in the large Simaroubaceae (quassia) family.

**Habitat:** Edges of marshy openings and along small drainages in coastal hydric hammocks; fresh or tidal marshes; frequently associated with saw grass and toothleaf.

**Best Survey Season:** Spring; February - March, but is identifiable year round by fruits, corky bark, leaf scars, and overall wandlike appearance.

**Range-wide Distribution:** Gulf coast of Florida from Franklin to Levy County and extending to south Georgia. Disjunct populations in Texas, Arkansas, and Missouri.

**Conservation Status:** Half of FL's populations occur in conservation areas along the Big Bend.

**Protection and Management:** Natural hydrology is required for the maintenance of corkwood populations. Remove invasive exotic plants and limit disturbances from boats along shoreline near populations.

**References:** Channell and Wood 1962, Day 1975, Fernando and Quinn 1995, Godfrey and Clewell 1965, Godfrey 1988, Nelson 1996, Ward 1979, Wunderlin and Hansen 2000a.